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## Suspended Tonalities in Schönberg's Twelve-tone Compositions

### I.

North American music theorists have generally viewed Schönberg's twelve-tone music as a total departure from the complex tonal idiom of his early maturity, and have been skeptical of the so-called "tonal reminiscences" that listeners sometimes believe they perceive in Schönberg's twelve-tone compositions. Even so, a few scholars writing in English, such as Roger Sessions, Hans Keller, Silvina Milstein, Michael Cherlin, and others, have ventured to question, in different ways, whether Schönberg's twelve-tone music completely abandons tonality.<sup>1</sup> However, no consensus has emerged among the few scholars willing to pursue the problem, nor with their dissenting colleagues, because no conceptual framework has yet been offered that would facilitate debate between scholarly camps who cannot even agree on the relevance and the scope of the question. This situation has failed to explain fully the evolutionary relationship between Schönberg's early tonal masterpieces and his twelve-tone compositions. The following arguments attempt to address that problem, by viewing Schönberg's twelve-tone method in relation to his most important ideas about tonality.

1 Roger Sessions, *Harmonic Practice* (New York 1951), 406–408; see also Edward T. Cone, "Conversations with Roger Sessions," in *Perspectives on American Composers*, edited by Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone (New York 1971), 102–103; Hans Keller, "Schoenberg's Return to Tonality," in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 5 (1981), no. 1, 2–21; Silvina Milstein, *Arnold Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms* (Cambridge 1992); Michael Cherlin, "Schoenberg and *Das Unheimliche*: Spectres of Tonality," in *Journal of Musicology* 11 (1993), no. 3, 357–373; and Michael Cherlin, "Memory and Rhetorical

Tropé in Schoenberg's String Trio," in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51 (1998), no. 3, 559–602. Also relevant to the present topic are Jonathan Dunsby, "Schoenberg on Cadence," in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 4 (1980), no. 1, 41–49; Thomas Christensen, "Schoenberg's Opus 11, No. 1: A Parody of Pitch Cells from *Tristan*," in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 10 (1987), no. 1, 38–44; and Carl Dahlhaus, "Tonality: structure or process?," in *Schoenberg and the New Music: Essays by Carl Dahlhaus*, translated by Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton (Cambridge 1987), 62–72.

In Schönberg's theory and practice of tonality, "vagrant chords" play a special role. Their uncanny ability to direct a tonal argument in unexpected (and even contradictory) directions lead Schönberg to describe them with dripping irony in his 1911 "Harmonielehre":

*"[...] homeless phenomena, unbelievably adaptable and [yet also] unbelievably lacking in independence; spies, who ferret out weaknesses and use them to cause confusion; turncoats, to whom abandonment of their individuality is an end in itself; agitators in every respect, but above all: most amusing fellows."*<sup>2</sup>

Harmonic vagrancy permeates Schönberg's tonal music, and also inflects his various concepts of tonality. The concept of "monotonicity" described in his last book, "Structural Functions of Harmony," is in fact a coordinated structure of relationships between multiple "tonalities" of a more traditional sort; these are conceived as "regions," distributed at various degrees of remove from a central tonic which ultimately organizes and integrates them.<sup>3</sup> Schönberg's concept of monotonicity is therefore a "coordinated multi-tonality," a hierarchy among multiple regions; consequently, the prefix "mono-" must be understood to mean "unified" rather than "single." Harmonic vagrancy is essential to this concept, because it helps to generate and coordinate inter-regional relationships. The multivalence of vagrant chords works as a unifying force, and is thus a synecdochic manifestation of the unifying power of the "monotonicity" that coordinates the various regions. Although a vagrant chord may be resolved in this or that fashion in any given instance, each vagrant chord abstractly and implicitly balances several resolutions or continuations against one another, keeping them all in *potentia* and in *suspense*. That idea will be elaborated in what follows.

A recurring principle in Schönberg's musical thought is the apposition of balance and imbalance. This principle appears frequently in Schönberg's prose writings, and several passages which invoke the concept are given for reference (and without further comment) in the Appendix at the end of this essay (p. 264–265). In all of these citations, the compositional act and the musical idea are associated with the creation of imbalances that are eventually brought into balance. This broad notion manifests itself in many of Schönberg's theoretical concepts. A vagrant chord, for instance, is an abstract locus of balance in that it can be extended with equal ease in numerous directions, but the abstract balance of its multivalence is always tilted off-balance whenever any particular resolution is actually enacted and continued, temporarily favoring one possibility

2 The German original appears in Arnold Schönberg, *Harmonielehre* (Leipzig, Wien 1911), 284. The English translation used here is from Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, translated by Roy E. Carter

(Berkeley 1978), 258. Carter's English translation is based on the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the "Harmonielehre" (Wien 1922), in which the present passage is unchanged from the original.

3 Arnold Schoenberg, *Structural Functions of Harmony* [1954], revised edition, edited by Leonard Stein (New York 1969), 19–20.

over the others. In slightly different ways, the concept of “monotonicity” likewise involves the coordination of various balances and imbalances among the different regions in a composition. The next few paragraphs explore some further kinds of balance and imbalance implicit in Schönberg’s theoretical concepts and writings.

The concept of “monotonicity” was formulated long after the invention of the twelve-tone method. By contrast, the concepts of *schwebende* and *aufgehobene Tonalität* were first described in Schönberg’s 1911 “*Harmonielehre*,” well before the twelve-tone method was conceived.<sup>4</sup> These two earlier concepts of tonality also hinge on the implications of harmonic vagrancy and the apposition of balance and imbalance, since fluctuating and unbalanced harmonic vagrancies can produce tonal instability and multivalence, but can also be balanced against one another so that tonal closure is kept in suspense. The twelve-tone method which took shape a decade later constitutes, I will argue, a synthetic extension of both *schwebende* and *aufgehobene Tonalität*. While the total abandonment of tonality may have become a basic assumption for some later composers, I believe that for Schönberg the twelve-tone method was not a way to abandon tonality, but instead a systematic way to achieve a complete suspension of tonality: *aufgehobene Tonalität* in the fullest Hegelian sense.

Perhaps this brings us closer to what Schönberg meant when he commented, rather surprisingly, on “*the tonality of a twelve-tone series*” in a footnote added (in 1921) to the third edition of the “*Harmonielehre*” (published in 1922). The passage in question appears below, set in two parts. It begins with Schönberg’s well-known rejection of the term “atonal”:

*“The word ‘atonal’ could only signify something entirely inconsistent with the nature of tone. [...] A piece of music will always have to be tonal, at least in so far as a relation has to exist from tone to tone by virtue of which the tones, placed next to or above one another, yield a perceptible continuity. The tonality may then perhaps be neither perceptible [fühlbar] nor provable [nachweisbar]; these relations may be obscure and difficult to comprehend [schwerverständlich], even incomprehensible [unverständlich]. [...] Besides, there has been no investigation at all of the question whether the way these new sounds go together is not actually the tonality of a twelve-tone series [die Tonalität*

4 See Arnold Schönberg, *Harmonielehre*, see fn. 2, 430–431, with English translation in Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, see fn. 2, 383–384. The concepts of *schwebende* and *aufgehobene Tonalität* are also mentioned in Arnold Schoenberg, *Structural Functions of Harmony*, see fn. 3, 111. The discussion is very short in both books, making it difficult to discern exactly how Schönberg distinguished the two concepts. The adjectives *schwebend*

and *aufgehoben* overlap somewhat in meaning, but here I shall understand the former to mean “fluctuating tonality,” and the latter to mean “suspended tonality.” In both books, Schönberg mentions his song “*Lockung*,” op. 6, no. 7, as an example of *schwebende Tonalität*. Later I will be commenting on passages from some of the other songs in the op. 6 collection.

einer Zwölftonreihe]. *It is indeed probably just that, [and] hence would be a phenomenon paralleling the situation that led to the church modes, of which I say: 'The effect of a fundamental tone was felt, but since no one knew which tone it was, all of them were tried.' Here we do not yet even feel the fundamental; nevertheless it is therefore probably present.*"<sup>5</sup>

The antecedent part of this argument, after rejecting the term "atonal," proceeds to posit a striking concept of tonality that might in fact be imperceptible, unprovable, and even incomprehensible. The consequent part of the argument takes this extraordinary idea even further. It first associates this unusual concept of tonality with the twelve-tone method, and then proposes the paradoxical argument that the imperceptibility of a fundamental might actually testify to its presence. It is present precisely because it seems to be absent, or more accurately, because it is not perceived. "Here," says Schönberg, "we do not yet even feel the fundamental." The "here" in question is a strange utopia – a very Schönbergian one, I think – where only the imperceptible can actually bear witness. Schönberg's argument enacts exactly the kind of paradoxical and supplementary interplay of absence and presence that is analyzed in Jacques Derrida's early writings.<sup>6</sup> More important, Schönberg's concept of an imperceptible tonality also bears deep connections with ideas expressed in "Moses und Aron" and in the second of the "Vier Stücke für gemischten Chor," op. 27, to which I shall return later.

Schönberg's essay "Problems of Harmony" (presented as a lecture in 1927 and revised for publication in 1934) returns to the arguments advanced in the passage cited above.<sup>7</sup> The essay (which falls squarely within Schönberg's twelve-tone period) first examines the conditions under which tonality obtains, and demonstrates that it is a convention rather than a natural law. But the essay then goes on to suggest that some wider notion of tonality is still relevant to (so-called) "atonal" and twelve-tone compositions. Schönberg expresses his hope that "in a few decades audiences will recognize the tonality of this music

5 Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, see fn. 2, 432 (emphasis added). The passage quoted in the penultimate sentence appears on page 25 of the same volume. The German, originally added to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (1922), is here quoted from Arnold Schönberg, *Harmonielehre*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (Wien 1966), 486. Schönberg's analogy with the church modes was later echoed by René Leibowitz in comments on the gradual suspension of the modal system during the long period in which the tonal system took shape. See René Leibowitz, *Schoenberg and His School: The Contemporary Stage of the Language of Music* [1946], translated by Dika Newlin [1949], reprint edition (New York 1975), 78.

6 See for instance Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* [1967], translated by David B. Allison (Evanston, Illinois 1973); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* [1967], translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore 1976); and Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* [1972], translated by Barbara Johnson (Chicago 1981).

7 Arnold Schoenberg, "Problems of Harmony," in *Style and Idea. Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, edited by Leonard Stein, revised paperback edition (Berkeley 1984), 268–287. This essay was originally presented as a lecture at the *Akademie der Künste* in Berlin on 20 January 1927. It was revised in 1933 and 1934 for publication in *Modern Music* 11 (May–June 1934), no. 4, 167–187, translated into English by Adolph Weiss.

today called *atonal*” and asserts that the difference is only “a *gradual one between the tonality of yesterday and the tonality of today*.”<sup>8</sup> He clarifies the latter point by remarking that:

“[...] *music which today is called ‘tonal’ establishes a key relationship continuously or does so at least at the proper moment; but music which is today called ‘not tonal’ never allows predominance of key relationships. The difference between the two methods is largely in the emphasis or non-emphasis on the tonality.*”<sup>9</sup>

These comments suggest that some concept of tonality is still relevant, in Arnold Schönberg’s thinking, to “atonal” and twelve-tone music. The specific concept of tonality he has in mind is clarified, at least somewhat, by the following formulation:

“*I have recommended that we give the term ‘pantonal’ to what is called atonal. By this we can signify: the relation of all tones to one another, regardless of occasional occurrences, assured by the circumstance of a common origin.*”<sup>10</sup>

In this formulation, the concept of “pantonicity” involves “*the relation of all tones to one another,*” and it can therefore be implicitly equated with the twelve-tone method that Schönberg had been using since the early 1920’s.<sup>11</sup> But how should we understand this concept of “pantonicity”? How does it relate to Schönberg’s other theoretical concepts, and what did he mean by acknowledging “*occasional occurrences, assured by the circumstances of a common origin*”? Here we should also bear in mind Schönberg’s remark, late in life, that “*My school, including such men as Alban Berg, Anton Webern and others, does not aim at the establishment of tonality, yet does not exclude it entirely.*”<sup>12</sup>

Whereas the later concept of “monotonicity,” directed to music still called “tonal,” merely coordinates and unifies multiple regions with respect to a single tonic, I will argue that what Schönberg called “*pantonicity*” or the “*tonality of a twelve-tone series*” is synthetic in a much more Hegelian sense. I suggest that the concept of *Pantonalität* combines and supersedes the concepts of *schwebende* and *aufgehobene Tonalität*. It applies the principle of balance (and imbalance) at a new level, and accomplishes the suspension of all tonalities – and of

8 Ibidem, 284 (emphasis in the original).

9 Ibidem (emphasis added).

10 Ibidem; in fact, Schönberg had originally introduced the term “pantonal” a bit later in the footnote to the 1922 edition of the “*Harmonielehre*” that was cited above (see Arnold Schönberg, *Theory of Harmony*, see fn. 2, 432, and Arnold Schönberg, *Harmonielehre*, [1966], see fn. 5, 487). At that time he did not, however, include any definition of the term, such as is given in this citation from “*Problems of Harmony*.”

11 The wording of the description here is nearly identical with the formulation found in Arnold Schoenberg “Composition with Twelve Tones (1),” in *Style and Idea*, see fn. 7, 218: “*I called this procedure Method of Composing with Twelve tones Which are Related Only with One Another*” (emphasis in the original).

12 Arnold Schoenberg, *Structural Functions of Harmony*, see fn. 3, 193.

“tonality” in the traditional sense – by counterbalancing multiple (and simultaneous) *schwebende Tonalitäten* against one another.<sup>13</sup> Through the counterbalancing of *schwebende Tonalitäten*, it achieves a “higher” and entirely abstract concept of tonality, through the total Hegelian synthesis of all individual tonalities. The concept of *Pantonalität*, and the twelve-tone music that arguably attempts to realize it, refine “tonality” into a pure idea, to attain a state in which tonality – or more accurately, the representation of any individual tonality – is *aufgehoben* in the fullest Hegelian sense.<sup>14</sup> I shall adopt the expression “*unvorstellbare Tonalität*” to identify this concept and anchor it in the conceptual world of Schönberg’s most important composition. After all, the passage cited above (from the [1922] “*Harmonielehre*”) describes a purified notion of tonality that is neither perceptible, nor provable, nor comprehensible, and that must be present precisely because it is not sensed. In the first scene of “*Moses und Aron*,” written a few years later, Schönberg would have Moses apostrophize the Divine in very similar terms: “*Einzig, ewiger, allgegenwärtiger, unsichtbarer und unvorstellbarer Gott!*”

In this connection let us briefly consider Example 1 (see the facsimile on the following page), which shows Schönberg’s own tonal harmonization of the theme from the “*Variationen für Orchester*,” op. 31, which he presented during a 1931 Frankfurt Radio lecture, evidently in the hopes of helping the radio audience appreciate the twelve-tone setting.<sup>15</sup> Schönberg described this harmonization as “*quite a good F major, which insistently courts G flat major, corresponding to a neapolitan sixth*,” and he rejected it only with the words “*I don’t like it, but that is a matter of taste*.”<sup>16</sup> It fluctuates between the two keys but rarely uses their tonic triads, and it nicely illustrates the kinds of *schwebende* and *aufgehobene Tonalität* that Schönberg describes in the “*Harmonielehre*” and in “*Structural Functions of Harmony*,” by exploiting different kinds of harmonic vagrancy and by counterbalancing the two keys against one another. In my view, this tonal harmonization

13 My notion of counterbalance quite closely resembles Arthur Lovejoy’s concept of counterpoise, which is discussed by Michael Cherlin in an article that appeared in print after the Symposium “Arnold Schönberg in Berlin.” See Michael Cherlin, “Dialectical Opposition in Schoenberg’s Music and Thought,” in *Music Theory Spectrum* 22 (2000), no. 2, 157–176, at p. 160. Cherlin’s essay offers a perceptive and trenchant study of Hegelian and Heraclitan tendencies in Schoenberg’s thought, and its considerations are often relevant to the ideas presented here.

14 René Leibowitz makes a similar point when he remarks that the later twelve-tone compositions, “*despite certain vestiges of tonality, tend, in their entirety, rather to surpass the tonal order than to consolidate it. In other words, the tone-row technique in general and the twelve-tone technique in particular, far from having restored the functions of tonality to the total resources of chromaticism, have transcended and suspended these functions*.” See René Leibowitz, *Schoenberg and His School*, see fn. 5, 116 (emphasis added).

15 An English translation of the lecture appears in Arnold Schoenberg, “The Orchestral Variations, Op. 31: A Radio Talk,” in *The Score* (July 1960), 27–40.

16 Ibidem, 33.



Handwritten musical notation for the first system of Example 1, showing staves 7 through 9. Staff 7 has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Staff 8 has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. Staff 9 has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system of Example 1, showing staves 10 through 12. Staff 10 has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. Staff 11 has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. Staff 12 has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Example 1. Arnold Schönberg's 1931 tonal harmonization of the theme from the "Variationen für Orchester," op. 31.

was not only meant to show a critical public that the composer could still compose tonally, as is often suggested.<sup>17</sup> The simple fact that Schönberg was willing to present it is extraordinarily significant. Had it represented a complete contradiction of the finished twelve-tone work, it is unlikely that Schönberg would even have contemplated it, let alone composed it and then taken the risk of presenting it. Its limited forms of *schwebende* and *aufgehobene Tonalität* may in fact have been meant to give listeners an impression of how the twelve-tone harmonization in the actual work is to be heard. In that sense, the existence of the tonal harmonization attests to the hypothesis that traces of tonality lie suspended at the margins of Schönberg's twelve-tone works. In fact, one wonders whether Schönberg, in rejecting it only on the basis of taste, was doing so with a more refined concept of tonality in mind – such as *Pantonalität* or *unvorstellbare Tonalität* – rather than declaring an abandonment of tonality, as has generally been assumed.

The notions of *Pantonalität* and *unvorstellbare Tonalität* will help us understand the uncanny moments of apparent tonal function sometimes encountered in Schönberg's twelve-tone music.<sup>18</sup> It seems to me unsatisfactory to call these moments “tonal reminiscences,” as some authors have done, because the intended meaning(s) and scope of the adjective “tonal” are not specified, so that it is not clear which aspects of tonality – and even what concept of tonality – are being invoked.<sup>19</sup> The sense of tonal agency during these moments often has an illusory quality, and it often arises more from mere appearance (*Schein*) than from actual structural function. To emphasize the uncertain “tonal” status of these moments, I shall call them “*Scheintonalitätsmomente*.”

If we conceive of Schönberg's twelve-tone practice as extending *aufgehobene Tonalität* to the point of *Unvorstellbarkeit*, then *Scheintonalitätsmomente* can be understood as fragmentary and supplementary artefacts that reveal how the twelve-tone method suspends tonality. Because Schönberg's music involves the interplay of balance and imbalance, *Scheintonalitätsmomente* can be understood to result from temporary imbalances in the twelve-tone system's abstract

17 For instance, see Glenn Watkins, *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York 1988), 334.

18 On the uncanny aspect of these moments, see especially Michael Cherlin, “Schoenberg and *Das Unheimliche*: Spectres of Tonality,” and also Michael Cherlin, “Memory and Rhetorical Trope in Schoenberg's String Trio” (both cited in fn. 1). Cherlin's discussion of these moments of apparent tonal function focuses on different aspects than I do in the present paper, but I find that his insights – so often of a remarkable depth and poetic resonance – are very consonant with my own.

19 For instance, it is not correct (as Schönberg points out in “Problems of Harmony,” see fn. 7, 281–282) to infer that tonality is at work from the mere appearance of one or more harmonic triads. Tonality is much more than just a collection of characteristic kinds of sounds. If the term “tonal reminiscences” is to be used, the specific scope of the word “tonal” will have to be defined – in ways, moreover, that make its adoption convincing.

counterbalancing of multiple tonal relationships. They are fissures in the twelve-tone structure, and they reveal the suspension of tonality antithetically, in a momentary impression of tonal function that appears as a (Derridean) supplement to the twelve-tone method.<sup>20</sup>

*Scheintonalitätsmomente*, or imbalances in the suspension of tonality, are quite common in Schönberg's twelve-tone compositions, but I cannot conclude that they are systematically controlled, and I caution against formulating analytical methodologies aimed at demonstrating how tonal structuring is somehow truly integrated within Schönberg's twelve-tone practice.<sup>21</sup> In my view, *Scheintonalitätsmomente* are supplementary events, and their significance is liminal – if not deconstructive – rather than structural. Were they of structural significance, they would have to submit to the concept of monotonicity and its regions. Instead, they are little more than mere appearance (*Schein*), but they are nonetheless of considerable (supplementary) significance: they freeze a moment of *Aufhebung* and reveal in a fleeting tonal representation how Schönberg's twelve-tone music generally suspends tonality through the abstract counterbalancing of numerous tonal forces. The analytical vignettes that follow will therefore not claim that tonality “still works” in Schönberg's twelve-tone music; instead, they will demonstrate that it is suspended and generally rendered *unvorstellbar* in Schönberg's twelve-tone works, so far as *unvorstellbare Tonalität* can be revealed by supplementary *Scheintonalitätsmomente* of various sorts.<sup>22</sup>

20 The Derridean concept of the supplement appears throughout the items listed in fn. 6, and in many of Derrida's other early writings. At the risk of oversimplification, supplementarity occurs when one term or concept, thought to be opposed to and external to another term or concept, paradoxically turns out instead to be internal to and even essential for the constitution of the second term. Derrida's classic case of supplementarity occurs in his deconstruction of the binary opposition of writing and voice, in which he shows how a generalized concept of writing is implicit to any concept of voice (and vice versa). Similarly, I am suggesting here that the twelve-tone method, at least as Schönberg used it, cannot be set in a clean binary opposition with tonality, as though they were dialectical opposites; instead, tonality bears a supplementary relation to the twelve-tone method, and *Scheintonalitätsmomente* provide the fragmentary evidence that tonality is at once extraneous to and implicit within Schönberg's twelve-tone method.

21 This is not to claim that the successful formulation of such an analytical methodology must be impossible. Still, weaknesses of the sort mentioned in fn. 19 undermine Silvina Milstein's *Arnold Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms*, see fn. 1. I cannot agree with Milstein's premise (p. 5) that in some of Schönberg's twelve-tone compositions “single pitch-classes or pitch levels, rendered prominent by virtue of their position as boundaries or groupings, are often made to bear implications formerly pertaining to tonal regions or keys and therefore function as true tonal centres displaying centrality within a given context without necessarily carrying all the implications of the tonal system” (emphasis added). This premise is too fraught with assumptions, undefined concepts, and contradictions to form an effective basis for a compelling analytical methodology. For a more detailed critique of Milstein's book, see the review by Severine Neff, in *Music Theory Spectrum* 16 (1994), no. 1, 110–123.

22 I have explored some related ideas in selected passages from Schönberg's Fourth Quartet, op. 37, and String Trio, op. 45. See Richard Kurth, “Moments of Closure: Thoughts on the Suspension of Tonality in Schoenberg's Fourth Quartet and Trio,” in *Music of My Future: The Schoenberg Quartets and Trio*, edited by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Isham Library Papers 5, Harvard Publications in Music 20), Harvard University Department of Music (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), 139–160.

## II.

Among the mature twelve-tone works, the “Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte,” op. 41 is certainly most notorious for its *Scheintonalitätsmomente*, especially its famous ending “in E $\flat$  major.”<sup>23</sup> These *Scheintonalitätsmomente* usually arise because each [014589] hexachord – the hexachord type on which the “Ode” is based – can be partitioned into a major and minor triad in three different ways (and because Schönberg often deploys these harmonic triads on the surface in the piece). That property will be demonstrated shortly, and explored analytically. Beforehand, it will be interesting to observe some suggestive and striking similarities, hitherto mostly unnoticed, between the harmonic practice in the “Ode” and Schönberg’s earlier tonal style, here represented by selected passages from the “Acht Lieder,” op. 6, written in 1903–1905.

The second violin’s prominent melodic formula in the famous “E $\flat$  major” cadence at the end of the “Ode” (Example 2a) bears an uncanny resemblance to the piano’s right-hand melody in the closing measures from the song “Alles,” op. 6, no. 2 (shown in Example 2b), which presents a very similar melodic formula a fifth lower. The second violin in fact is in stretto with the first violin and viola, which begin a similar motive in bar 265 (beat two), moving in octaves like the right hand in the song, and at a rate closer to the song’s *etwas langsam* tempo. Meanwhile, the piano’s penultimate downbeat (in the “Ode”) and the cello’s penultimate notes together project and decorate dominant-function harmony, as does the left hand in the song’s penultimate bar.

The audible parallelisms between the two cadential formulae is striking, to say the least, even if it seems to operate merely on the surface. I shall forego a more detailed comparison of the two passages, which would explore how Schönberg departs from the operative hexachordal discourse to create the cadence at the end of the “Ode.” It is sufficient here simply to observe, as a point of departure for some further observations, how the end of the “Ode” quite strongly echoes a work from Schönberg’s first period.

There are other stylistic connections between the “Ode” and Schönberg’s earlier tonal style. The next few examples elaborate that idea in somewhat more specific terms, showing some additional harmonic correspondences between the “Ode” and other passages from the opus 6 songs.

23 In a letter (of 4 July 1947) to René Leibowitz, Schönberg writes: “It is true that the Ode at the end sounds like E $\flat$  major. I don’t know why I did it. Maybe I was wrong, but at present you cannot make me feel this.” See Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, edited by Erwin Stein, translated by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (Berkeley 1987), 248 (emphasis added).

265 **molto rit.** 266 267

265 **molto rit.** 266 267

Example 2a. Arnold Schönberg: "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," op. 41, final cadence<sup>24</sup>.

39 40 41

p pp

Example 2b. Arnold Schönberg: "Alles," op. 6, no. 2, final cadence<sup>25</sup>.

24 Arnold Schönberg, *Sämtliche Werke*. Abteilung VI: Kammermusik. Reihe A, Band 24. Melodramen und Lieder mit Instrumenten. Herausgegeben von Reinhold Brinkmann (Mainz, Wien 1996).

25 Arnold Schönberg, *Sämtliche Werke*. Abteilung I: Lieder und Kanons. Reihe A, Band 1. Lieder mit Klavierbegleitung. Herausgegeben von Josef Rufer (Mainz, Wien 1966).

Each of the following passages shows how the [014589] hexachord used in the “Ode” was already a characteristic harmonic collection in Schönberg’s tonal period. Example 2c shows bars 17–24 from the wonderful setting of Friedrich Nietzsche’s poem “Der Wanderer” (op. 6, no. 8). In bars 18–19, the [014589] hexachord  $\{F\sharp, G, A\sharp, B, D, E\flat\}$  results from the linkage of the augmented triads  $\{D, F\sharp, A\sharp\}$  and  $\{E\flat, G, B\}$ ; the  $E\flat$  minor triad later in bar 19 is also a subset of this hexachord. The same hexachord gradually takes shape again in bars 21–24; at the words “*Ach Vogel*” in bar 24 it is explicitly partitioned into a G major triad and an  $E\flat$  minor triad, with the latter elaborating the former. Shortly I will demonstrate certain senses in which the  $E\flat$  minor triad can be heard as having both dominant and subdominant function with respect to the G major triad.

*Etwas langsamer*

Da singt ein Vo - - - gel durch die Nacht. „Ach Vo - gel,

Example 2c. Arnold Schönberg: “Der Wanderer,” op. 6, no. 8, bars 17–24<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.



Example 2d. Arnold Schönberg: “Der Wanderer,” bars 9–11<sup>27</sup>.

Example 2d shows a similar passage from earlier in the same song (bars 9–11), with instances of the same [014589] hexachord now appearing in the piano right hand. In bars 9–10, the hexachord takes shape when an E<sup>b</sup> major triad is elaborated by a B minor triad. (The harmonic relation between the two triads is the same as in bar 24 of Example 2c, where the G major triad was elaborated by the E<sup>b</sup> minor triad.) When this little progression is repeated in bars 10–11, an A<sup>b</sup> is added to the B minor triad; in my hearing, this addition strengthens the subdominant function of the chord, a point that will be elaborated shortly.

Example 2e shows bars 13–16 from the song “Mädchenlied” (op. 6, no. 3) which bear some even stronger resemblances to the “Ode.” The piano left hand in bars 15–16 involves another transposition of the [014589] hexachord type, and in this instance Schönberg presents two slightly different triadic decompositions of the same hexachord: first as a C major triad linked to a G<sup>#</sup> minor triad; then as an E major triad linked to a C minor triad (spelled with D<sup>#</sup> instead of E<sup>b</sup>). In fact, this hexachord already begins to take shape in the left hand of bar 14, where Schönberg moves through F<sup>b</sup> minor (or E minor), A<sup>b</sup> minor, and C major triads.<sup>28</sup>

27 Ibidem.

28 I am grateful to my colleague William Benjamin for bringing these [014589] hexachords in “Mädchenlied” to my attention.

Example 2e. Arnold Schönberg: "Mädchenlied," op. 6, no. 3, bars 13–16<sup>29</sup>.

Perhaps even more striking on Example 2e are the first three left-hand tetra-chords in bar 13 (D–F–B<sup>b</sup>–D<sup>b</sup>, F–A<sup>b</sup>–D<sup>b</sup>–F<sup>b</sup>, and A<sup>b</sup>–C<sup>b</sup>–F<sup>b</sup>–G), which sequentially proclaim a tetrachordal motive that will be very prominent in the "Ode": an ascending motion through 3-then-5-then-3 semitones. In bar 13, the context for those motives is an "octatonic" collection, rather than a [014589] hexachord.<sup>30</sup> To show the remarkable similarity with the "Ode," Example 2f offers bars 13–15 from that work. Here the "Ode" briefly departs from its [014589] hexachordal discourse, and octatonic structuring is used instead in bar 13 (where the right

29 See fn. 25.

30 Schönberg derives the "octatonic" collection – although he does not use that name for it – in direct connection with the concept of harmonic vagrancy. He shows how a diminished-seventh chord can be interpreted as four different dominant-ninth chords, and how the roots of those four dominants

form another minor-third cycle; an "octa-tonic" collection results – as a higher-order harmonic concept – when the four roots are combined with the original diminished-seventh chord. See Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, see fn. 2, 366–367; or *Harmonielehre* [1911], see fn. 2, 411–412; or *Harmonielehre* [1966], see fn. 5, 441–442.



and left hands of the piano each unravel a distinct octatonic collection), and continues in the piano in bar 14 (where only a single octatonic collection is presented). The entire ensemble returns to the [014589] hexachordal structuring in bar 15, and it is here that the tetrachordal 3-5-3 motive just observed in “Mädchenlied” is stated prominently in the two violins (F–A<sup>b</sup>–D<sup>b</sup>–E).<sup>31</sup> The passages from the “Ode” and “Mädchenlied” share not only the tetrachordal motive, but also the contrast between the octatonic collection and the [014589] hexachord.

The musical score for Example 2f, Arnold Schönberg's "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," bars 13–15, is presented in two systems. The top system contains staves for Violins I and II, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses. The bottom system contains the piano accompaniment. Above the staves, the tempo markings "poco a poco accel." and "Pesante" are indicated. The piano part features triplets and tremolos. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, *cresc.*, and *ff*.

Example 2f. Arnold Schönberg: “Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte,” bars 13–15<sup>32</sup>.

31 The 3-5-3 motive first appears in numerous powerful statements made by the piano in bars 8–9. The 3-5-3 motive presents a [0347] tetrachord, which is a subset of both the [014589] hexachord type and also the [0134679A] octatonic collection; that fact surely helps to account for Schönberg’s use of the latter in bars 13 and 14.

32 See fn. 24.

All the similarities noted in the preceding examples can hardly be entirely circumstantial, and they indicate that the harmonic worlds of the earlier songs and the later twelve-tone work have much more in common than might be supposed. The common ground shared by the two works – the earlier work being incontrovertibly tonal, the later work bearing a debatable relation to tonality – will also provide a useful context in which to explore some *Scheintonalitätsmomente* in the “Ode.”

The triadic decomposition of the [014589] hexachord, found in the earlier songs and also the “Ode,” needs to be examined for its relation to traditional tonal harmonic function. Example 3a demonstrates how a [014589] hexachord – in this case {B $\flat$ , B, D, E $\flat$ , F $\sharp$ , G} – can be partitioned into a major and a minor triad in three distinct ways (these being related under transposition by 4 and 8 semitones, and also under three different axes of inversion).



Example 3a. The three minor/major triadic decompositions of the [014589] hexachord B, B $\flat$ , D, E $\flat$ , F $\sharp$ , G.

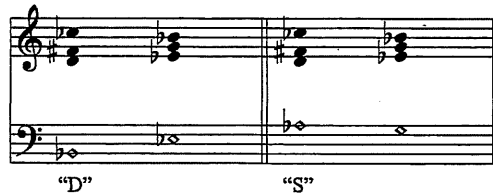
Example 3b takes the first of these pairs, and shows how the minor triad is functionally ambivalent with respect to the major triad, in that the former combines generalized dominant and generalized subdominant function relative to the latter. Generalized dominant function is revealed on the left side of Example 3b, where B $\flat$  has been “subposed” beneath the enharmonically-respelled B minor triad, to produce a typically Schönbergian dominant with augmented fifth and minor ninth. By contrast, generalized subdominant function emerges on the right side of Example 3b, where A $\flat$  has instead been added beneath the (enharmonically-respelled) B minor triad, to produce a half-diminished seventh chord that behaves like an augmented-sixth with subdominant function.<sup>33</sup> (In fact, this is precisely the addition made in bar 10 of “Der Wanderer,” as can be seen on Example 2d.) In short, the B minor triad possesses “functional vagrancy” (in the specific context of the [014589] hexachord) by simultaneously projecting (generalized) dominant and subdominant functions with respect to the E $\flat$  major triad. The dual functional vagrancy of the B minor triad (relative to the E $\flat$  major triad) results from two factors: the fact that the dominant and subdominant

33 The resulting chord is enharmonically equivalent to a “Tristan Chord,” but is resolved differently. In his discussion of half-diminished seventh chords in *Theory of Harmony*, Schönberg includes the resolution shown here. See *Theory of Harmony*, see fn. 2,

258, Example 190, third and fourth chords (transposed a fourth higher than our progression); see also *Harmonielehre* [1911], see fn. 2, 285, or *Harmonielehre* [1966], see fn. 5, 311. For an excellent discussion of subdominant-function (or “plagal”) augmented-sixth chords, see Daniel Harrison,

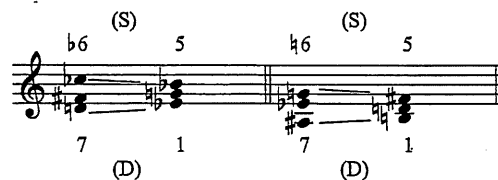
“Supplement to the Theory of Augmented-Sixth Chords,” in *Music Theory Spectrum* 17 (1995) no. 2, 170–195.

roots (B $\flat$  and A $\flat$  respectively) are both absent from the B minor triad; and the fact that the voice leading between the two triads is strictly by semitone.<sup>34</sup>



Example 3b. Functional ambivalence of the minor/major triadic decomposition: the minor triad combines *generalized* dominant and subdominant function with respect to the major. (Compare the right side with Example 2d, bars 10–11.)

In Example 3c this mixed harmonic function is manifested by the voice leading from the B minor to the E $\flat$  major triad, which resolves the leading tone in E $\flat$  (to discharge an aspect of dominant function) and also the lowered sixth scale degree (to discharge an aspect of subdominant function). This relationship is also symmetric, since the voice leading from the E $\flat$  major to the B minor triad likewise resolves the leading tone and lowered sixth scale degrees in B.



Example 3c. Mutual functional ambivalence of the minor and major triads.

In that particular sense, both triads manifest aspects of dominant/subdominant functional vagrancy with respect to each other, by virtue of what Richard Cohn has called the “parsimonious voice leading” between them.<sup>35</sup> Each can “tonicize” the other, because of their purely chromatic voice-leading connections and their strange evocation of ambivalent harmonic function, but this mutual relationship

34 Both factors are also engaged by the vagrancy of a diminished-seventh chord, which admits of four possible roots (none of which is a member of the vagrant chord itself), and which also resolves by (mostly) semitonal voice-leading motion.

35 Three recent and important articles by Richard Cohn address this topic in various ways. See Richard Cohn, “Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions,” in *Music Analysis* 15 (1996), no. 1, 9–40; and Richard Cohn, “Neo-Riemannian Operations,

Parsimonious Trichords, and Their Tonnetz Representations,” in *Journal of Music Theory* 41 (1997), no. 1, 1–66; and Richard Cohn, “Weitzmann’s Regions, My Cycles, and Douthett’s Dancing Cubes,” in *Music Theory Spectrum* 22 (2000), no. 1, 89–103.

engages them in an undecidable – or “suspended” – oscillation that makes both triads simultaneously stable and unstable, and that even makes the consonance of each triad ambivalent.<sup>36</sup>

Because of the mutual vagrancy possessed by both triads relative to one another, I shall use the term “*Doppelscheinklang*” for the pair of triads in a minor/major triadic decomposition of a [014589] hexachord (once again placing strong conceptual emphasis on the syllable *schein* in this appellation). The concept of a *Doppelscheinklang* extends the notion of harmonic vagrancy to a new level, involving not just a single chord with multivalent function, but a pair of chords with oscillating and self-reversing multivalences. Moreover, the concept also demonstrates, in the small, how tonal function can be suspended by setting vagrancies in an undecidable counterbalance. Because each [014589] hexachord can be configured as three different *Doppelscheinklänge* (minor/major triadic pairs), this hexachord type – heard in so many of Schönberg’s compositions – further suggests how the twelve-tone method suspends tonality by counterbalancing multiple tonal vagrancies. This hexachord type certainly lends itself to the creation of *Scheintonalitätsmomente* because its *Doppelscheinklang* decompositions produce such an uncanny impression of the tonally familiar. Whether the tonally familiar amounts to tonality is another matter.

Example 4a shows a passage from the “Ode” (bars 212–214) in which these properties create a rapid series of *Scheintonalitätsmomente*.<sup>37</sup> Example 4b extracts the triads from the piano part; the triads are beamed in pairs to indicate the *Doppelscheinklang* decompositions of the [014589] hexachords; these hexachords in turn group into aggregates that are labelled to show the strict transpositional sequence that unfolds.<sup>38</sup>

36 Listeners who experiment with the functionally ambivalent relation between the two triads may feel that the major triad possesses slightly stronger tonic function than the minor triad. In that regard the oscillating relation between the triads is not entirely balanced. This does not, however, undermine the mutual functional vagrancy of the pair. If the minor-to-major progression is characterized as dominant/subdominant-to-tonic (combining D–T and S–T), then the major-to-minor progression is characterized as tonic-to-dominant/subdominant (combining T–D and T–S). Even though the

major triad is associated with tonic function in both cases (and the minor triad with combined dominant/subdominant function), another functional ambiguity still remains, because the minor triad still invokes two functions. That is, the minor-to-major progression partially invokes D–T, while the major-to-minor relation partially invokes T–S, which can be construed as D–T in the subdominant region. Similarly, the minor-to-major progression also partially invokes S–T, while the major-to-minor relation also partially invokes T–D, which can be construed as S–T in the dominant region.

37 I shall focus my comments on the piano part, but the string parts involve similar characteristics that readers may examine on their own.

38 The string parts involve the same transpositional network of aggregates, and the same hexachords as the piano, but different *Doppelscheinklang* decompositions of those hexachords. The 3-5-3 motive is also prominent in the strings, along with its variant 5-3-5.

211 pizz. *f* 212 arco *ff* 3

miß - ach - - tet was die Nach - - weit rügt.

forth - so long obey'd - -so litt - le worth!

211 212 *ff*

213 214 rit. - - - - -

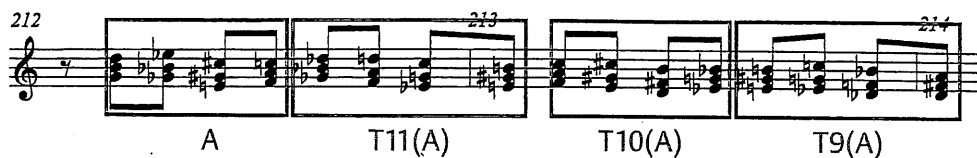
Sprichst du wie einst Pro - me - theus Kraft noch

Or, like the thief of fire from heaven,

213 214 rit. - - - - -

Example 4a. Arnold Schönberg: "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," bars 212 – 214<sup>39</sup>.

39 See fn. 24.



Example 4b. Reduction of Example 4a: *Doppelscheinklänge* and kaleidoscopic *schwebende Scheintonalitätsmomente*.

Now even though the passage mimics a chromatically descending tonal sequence, one that begins with a G major triad and extends to what might be heard as its dominant, can we really call this sequence a harmonic “progression,” or is it merely an aimless (though strictly sequential) “succession” of chords? Perhaps neither, and also both, to some degree. Schönberg contrasts these two concepts in the opening paragraphs of “Structural Functions of Harmony”:

*“A progression has the function of establishing or contradicting a tonality. The combination of harmonies of which a progression consists depends on its purpose – whether it is establishment, modulation, transition, contrast, or reaffirmation.*

*A succession of chords may be functionless, neither expressing an unmistakable tonality nor requiring a definite continuation. Such successions are frequently used in descriptive music.”*<sup>40</sup>

The passage certainly appears to be a functionless succession, since it apparently has no clear (tonal) implications for the following music, and also since the “Ode” arguably falls into the category of “*descriptive music*.”<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, it also engages both functions of a progression, as Schönberg’s first sentence defines them, in that each *Doppelscheinklang* briefly establishes – or better, suggests – a tonal center (or two), which each new hexachord also immediately contradicts. In other words, the passage unleashes a blistering *schwebende* tour through a kaleidoscopic series of *Scheintonalitätsmomente*, each already involving the oscillating harmonic functions of a *Doppelscheinklang*. The rapid fluctuation through so many *Doppelscheinklänge*, each with its undecidable harmonic vagrancy, pours forth multiple suggestions of tonality that are counterbalanced against one another, and thus neutralized. The rapid succession of ambivalent and suspended *Scheintonalitätsmomente* supports the hypothesis (suggested earlier) that Schönberg’s concept of *Pantonalität* should be understood as a neutralization or suspension of

40 Arnold Schoenberg, *Structural Functions of Harmony*, see fn. 3, 1.

41 Ethan Haimo makes this point regarding the “Ode” in “The Late Twelve-tone Compositions,” in *The Arnold Schoenberg Companion*, edited by Walter B. Bailey (Westport, Connecticut 1998), 163. Haimo cites the same excerpt from *Structural Functions of Harmony*, see fn. 3, but does not refer to this specific passage from the “Ode.”

traditional tonality attained by counterbalancing numerous individual tonal implications (or harmonic vagrancies). In this regard, the music comments ironically on the words just uttered by the reciter (*"Life will not long confine / That spirit pour'd so widely forth – / So long obey'd – so little worth!"*), by vividly demonstrating the neutralization of fragments of traditional tonality, against the unconfined possibilities of *Pantonalität* (as it is realized by the twelve-tone method).<sup>42</sup> In 1926 Schönberg had written that *"even standing where I do at the present time, I believe that to use the consonant chords, too, is not out of the question, as soon as someone has found a technical means of either satisfying or paralysing their formal claims."*<sup>43</sup> The concepts engaged by the preceding analysis suggest that Schönberg was able to "paralyze" the formal claims of triads by giving them a vastly heightened degree of vagrancy that is, in turn, set in counterbalance.

Bars 117–123 from the "Ode" generate a more extended *Scheintonalitätsmoment* which again illustrates how *Doppelscheinklänge* and *Scheintonalitätsmomente* are counterbalanced to suspend tonality. This excerpt (which will not be reproduced in full here) involves three short passages for strings and reciter, separated by two short piano interludes. I shall concentrate my comments on the three string passages, which project *Doppelscheinklänge* more strongly than do the piano interludes. (Readers may wish to consult a score to see the complete texture and to explore how the piano interludes respond to features I shall describe in the string passages.)

Example 5a presents only the first violin *Hauptstimme* in each passage, and Example 5b offers a *Doppelscheinklang* interpretation of each [014589] hexachord, in response to the contour, ordering, metric position, and duration of the pitches. The first and third phrases have the same hexachordal content (labelled H), but invoke different *Doppelscheinklang* interpretations, while the second phrase offers the contrast of the complementary hexachord (labelled h). If one plays the two examples several times in alternation, to explore how the harmonic interpretation corresponds with the melodic shaping of the violin line, one

42 René Leibowitz (*Schoenberg and His School*, see fn. 5, 129) makes a similar observation in writing that the "Ode" *"seems to oscillate perpetually among all possible tonalities, and, though it ends in E flat major, it is impossible to say that this tonality plays a preponderant part in the entire composition. Here, then, is revealed a new tonal principle"*. The "new tonal principle" Leibowitz mentions evidently involves the complete suspension

or transcendence (see fn. 12 above) of *"all possible tonalities"*; picking up Schönberg's use of the term, I have called this *Pantonalität*. Leibowitz's assertion that E<sup>b</sup> major does not play a *"preponderant part in the entire composition"* is tantamount to saying that the "Ode" does not exemplify the concept of monotonality described in *Structural Functions of Harmony*, see fn. 3.

43 Arnold Schoenberg, "Opinion or Insight?" in *Style and Idea*, see fn. 7, 262–263.

observes how the overall *Bogenform* (H–h–H) continuity of Example 5b makes an interesting and acceptable harmonic progression in A<sup>b</sup>, one that is hardly distinguishable from Schönberg's tonal style.<sup>44</sup> The *Doppelscheinklang* harmonic interpretation articulates in a very specific way the impression of an A<sup>b</sup> *Scheintonalität* that is already quite palpable in the violin *Hauptstimme* itself, and that is especially encouraged by the parallel cadential motions from G to A<sup>b</sup> which end both the first and third phrases. One must therefore ask whether this harmonic interpretation is a mere “succession” or a real “progression”? The harmonic interpretation of Example 5b bears such strong resemblances to Schönberg's tonal style that one must admit, I think, that the A<sup>b</sup> *Scheintonalität* of the first violin comes as close as imaginable to a “real” tonality, barely suspended.

Violin I

117

H h H

Violin I

(C-/E+) (D+/B<sup>b</sup>-) (E-/A<sup>b</sup>+)

Example 5a (above). Violin I *Hauptstimme* only: alternating [014589] hexachords, H and h.

Example 5b (below). *Doppelscheinklang* interpretation of the *Hauptstimme*.

h (D+/B<sup>b</sup>-) H (A<sup>b</sup>+/E-)

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

(D+/B<sup>b</sup>-) (C+/A<sup>b</sup>-) (N.B. augmented triads)

Example 5c. *Doppelscheinklang* interpretation of the accompaniment.

44 Example 5b is reminiscent of the chord progressions one finds in the “Harmonielehre.” In fact, the harmonic interpretation of

the first and third hexachords bears some very strong similarities with the piano left hand in bars 14–15 of Example 2e.



The accompanying hexachords, however, counterbalance the *Scheintonalität* of the first violin. Example 5c (vertically aligned beneath Examples 5a and 5b) offers a *Doppelscheinklang* interpretation of the accompaniment hexachords, showing the interleaved second violin triads on one staff, and the viola and cello triads together on the other. The final accompaniment hexachord is presented as two augmented triads by the viola and cello (rather than as a *Doppelscheinklang*), but the first two accompaniment hexachords form *Doppelscheinklänge*. In the first phrase, the D major/B $\flat$  minor *Doppelscheinklang* interpretation of the accompaniment anticipates the same interpretation of the first violin's second hexachord (cf. Example 5b); in the second phrase, the A $\flat$  major/E minor *Doppelscheinklang* interpreted in the second violin likewise anticipates the first violin's third hexachord, while the viola and cello present a different decomposition of the hexachord.

These correspondences might conceivably support the first violin's emerging A $\flat$  *Scheintonalität*. But several factors conspire to diffuse this *Scheintonalität* when Examples 5b and 5c are combined (in accordance with their vertical alignment). Within each phrase, the complementary hexachords of the first violin and the accompaniment counterbalance each other, partially obscuring their *Doppelscheinklänge* (along with the correspondences or similarities observed between them in adjacent phrases). Moreover, although the viola and cello individually arpeggiate unambiguous triads in the first and second phrases, together they consistently present simultaneous pitch-class semitones. The dissonance of those simultaneous dyads obliterates the impression of their *Doppelscheinklänge*, even though a clear impression of *Scheintonalität* emerges in the first violin (and also the second violin) when the same pitch-class semitones are expressed as voice-leading connections between triads in a *Doppelscheinklang*.

The passage is ripe with *Scheintonalitätsmomente* that nearly pass for the real thing, but it also clearly demonstrates how the twelve-tone method counterbalances tonal vagrancies against one another. Because it proceeds slowly, and because the first violin's *Doppelscheinklänge* remain dimly perceptible despite the counterbalancing of complementary hexachords, the passage demonstrates how the twelve-tone method suspends tonality by subsuming the concepts of *schwebende* and *aufgehobene Tonalität*, and it freezes an extended moment of *Aufhebung* to expose the counterbalancing mechanics of *Pantonalität*.

My detailed analysis of *Doppelscheinklänge* in the passage also illustrates the irony of Schönberg's setting in this passage of the words "a strict accountant of his beads, / a subtle disputant on creeds." My rather strict account of the shifting tonal vagrancies in the passage shows how Schönberg's setting makes a subtle disputation of traditional tonality, revealing that even a limited number of major and minor triads can interrelate in functionally ambivalent ways. Because the analysis demonstrates so concretely how tonality is suspended through counterbalancing

tonal vagrancies, it characterizes this twelve-tone passage more as an instance of marginal *Pantonalität* than as a full-fledged case of *unvorstellbare Tonalität*, and it emphasizes the liminal but palpable *Vorstellbarkeit* of the gradually unfolding *A<sup>b</sup> Scheintonalität* of the first violin *Hauptstimme* (as interpreted by Ex. 5a and 5b).

That kind of partial representation is the topic of a passage from Schönberg's 1925 "Stück für gemischten Chor," "Du sollst nicht, du mußt," op. 27, no. 2, which expresses the problem that would take larger dramatic form in "Moses und Aron": the *Unvorstellbarkeit* of the Divine, and of pure abstract ideas more generally. Bars 1–9 from the work set forth a paraphrase of the *Bilderverbot* commandment: "Du sollst dir kein Bild machen! Denn ein Bild schränkt ein, begrenzt, faßt, was unbegrenzt und unvorstellbar bleiben soll." The piece is among the earlier twelve-tone compositions, and the cadence in bars 8–9 reveals how the method aims to attain what I have called *unvorstellbare Tonalität*. It does so paradoxically, however, by exposing a supplementary *Scheintonalitätsmoment* at the very words "und unvorstellbar bleiben soll," where the tenor's cadence on *A<sup>b</sup>* creates a brief but uncanny impression of A major.

To explore that sensation, Example 6a shows the parts leading up to the cadence, which set the words "und unvorstellbar bleiben soll." It interprets the cadential texture as a sequence of minor and major triads formed "diagonally," in rough correspondence with the staggered vocal entries beginning in bar 6. This interpretation is simply my own idiosyncratic attempt to understand the cadential *Scheintonalitätsmoment* by exploring how it is approached, but I shall examine it as a thought experiment in any case. Example 6b abstracts and realigns the triads, using stems and beams to indicate how they form *Doppelscheinklänge* and [014589] hexachords.

The formation of *Doppelscheinklänge* and [014589] hexachords here is quite remarkable, because the row for the piece is not based on that hexachord type.<sup>45</sup> The beams beneath the staff interpret both hexachords analogously, and expose a sequential progression: G minor acts as a mixed dominant/subdominant to B major, then the progression is repeated a tone lower (but in higher

45 The row is P = C, B, E, B<sup>b</sup>, D, A<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, G, F<sup>♯</sup>, F, A, C<sup>♯</sup>, based on [023468] hexachords. Readers may examine for themselves how the serial derivation of the passage involves some interesting manipulations of two row forms: P, and its combinatorial inversion F, F<sup>♯</sup>, C<sup>♯</sup>, G, E<sup>b</sup>, A, D, B<sup>b</sup>, B, C, A<sup>b</sup>, E.

Example 6a (above) shows vocal staves for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) across measures 6, 7, 8, and 9. Example 6b (bottom) shows a piano reduction of the same measures, with triadic interpretation indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 above the notes. A note below the piano part is marked (N.B.).

(Aber auch dieses soll unvorstellbar bleiben ... )

Example 6a (above). Reduction of bars 6–9 (“und unvorstellbar bleiben soll”), with triadic interpretation.

Example 6b (below). Triadic interpretation realigned: Doppelscheinklänge and [014589] hexachords.

register), with F minor likewise “resolving” to A major.<sup>46</sup> As this symmetry unfolds, the texture thins and the registral span rapidly contracts onto the tenor’s final A, so that just as this very uncanny *Scheintonalitätsmoment* comes into focus, its image also seems to fade, and *Unvorstellbarkeit* is conveyed to the listener in the experience of a tonal *Bild* of the most tenuous *Vorstellbarkeit*.

The rest of the piece is devoid of any other *Scheintonalitätsmomente* (at least to my present hearing), and it otherwise instantiates how the twelve-tone method achieves the total *Aufhebung* of tonality that I have called *unvorstellbare Tonalität*. Example 6b therefore exposes an extremely *unheimlich* (given the words involved) and supplementary lapse in the otherwise counterbalanced suspension of tonality achieved by Schönberg’s twelve-tone music. In trying to reveal that *Scheintonalitätsmoment*, Example 6b also magnifies (and distorts) it to the point where its subtlety is at risk, and we must remember that the

46 An alternative *Doppelscheinklang* interpretation of the last hexachord, placed in smaller type and beamed above, elaborates

the principal interpretation (beamed below), which more strongly captures the imaginary cadence on A major harmony.

example attempts to do the impossible. To show how the twelve-tone method achieves the abstract and purified idea of *unvorstellbare Tonalität* is to try to represent the unrepresentable. This is precisely what Schönberg's text warns against, and that is why I have added the words "*Aber auch dieses soll unvorstellbar bleiben ...*" beneath the example. Anyone attempting to hear how Schönberg's twelve-tone practice suspends and purifies tonality to the point of *Unvorstellbarkeit* will inevitably encounter the problem that plagued Schönberg's Moses, and would do well to recall those cautionary words.<sup>47</sup>

*Scheintonalitätsmomente* such as those examined above are temporary imbalances that reveal in a supplementary tonal image (a mere image!) how the twelve-tone method suspends tonality and achieves *Pantonalität* or even *unvorstellbare Tonalität* through the abstract counterbalancing of tonal forces. Like the Burning Bush in the first scene of "Moses und Aron," they hover in that liminal utopia relentlessly pursued by Schönberg's ear and imagination: on the margin between *vorstellbar* and *unvorstellbar*.

#### Appendix. The Apposition of Balance and Imbalance: Selected Citations from Schönberg's Prose Legacy.

- (a) Every tone which is added to a beginning tone makes the meaning of that tone doubtful. If, for instance, G follows after C, the ear may not be sure whether this expresses C major or G major, or even F major or E minor; and the addition of other tones may or may not clarify this problem. In this manner there is produced a state of *unrest*, of *imbalance* which grows throughout most of the piece, and is enforced further by similar functions of the rhythm. *The method by which balance is restored* seems to me the real *idea* of the composition. Perhaps the frequent repetitions of themes, groups, and even larger sections might be considered as attempts towards an early balance of inherent tension.<sup>48</sup>

47 It is striking in this regard that [014589] hexachords and *Doppelscheinklänge* abound in "Moses und Aron," Act I, scene 4, bars 607–615, during climactic repetitions of the words "*Bleib uns fern!*" Christian Martin Schmidt discusses this passage in his contribution to the Round-table on "Moses und Aron," in this volume, see p. 5.

48 Arnold Schoenberg, "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea," in *Style and Idea*, see fn. 7, 123 (emphasis added, except on "idea" which is italicized by Schönberg).

- (b) One must not forget that – theory or no theory – a composer’s only yardstick is his sense of *balance* and his belief in the infallibility of the *logic* of his musical thinking.<sup>49</sup>
- (c) Through the combination of tones of varying pitch, duration, and stress, arises an imbalance [*Unruhe*]: balance [*Ruhe*] is cast into question through contrast. From this imbalance comes movement, which after reaching a climax leads back to balance, or to a new (novel) consolidation which is equivalent to balance. If only a single tone is struck, it makes one believe that it represents a tonic. Every subsequent tone challenges this tonic sensation. That is a kind of imbalance. Likewise is it the case with duration and stress. We experience one or more pulses of equal time interval and intensity as balance or monotony. However, through variation of the timespan between two tones, and of the attack strength, arises imbalance once again. Imbalance can be further increased through dynamics (and other means of expression).<sup>50</sup>
- (d) The extension of the musical idea can only (keeping to the facts) have as its consequence that the imbalance-problem contained in the *Grundgestalt*, or respectively in the *Motiv*, [...] will be revealed in all its consequences. These consequences are presented through the destiny of the *Motiv* or of the *Grundgestalt*. How the *Grundgestalt* varies itself under the influence of the struggling energies within it, in this movement in which the imbalance occurs, and in what manner it is then brought back to balance, that is the development of the idea, that is its presentation.<sup>51</sup>
- (e) Defining the musical idea by way of an imbalance also explains why the route to development in music is always to create new kinds of “imbalance”: the old kinds can no longer excite the nerves, stronger stimulations are required, and give rise to the interest to experience how stronger imbalances are controlled, that is, brought back to balance.<sup>52</sup>

49 Arnold Schoenberg, “My Evolution,” in *Style and Idea*, 87, (emphasis added).

50 Arnold Schönberg: “[Der] Musikalische Gedanke”, dated 9 and 13 June 1934 (Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T 65.03], 15–16), my translation.

51 Ibidem, p. 35, my translation.

52 Ibidem, dated 14 June 1934, p. 91, my translation.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for Arnold Schönberg's "Variationen für Orchester op. 31, Skizze". The score is written on multiple staves, showing various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The notation is dense and includes many handwritten annotations and corrections. The score is organized into systems, with each system containing multiple staves. The notation is written in black ink on white paper. The score includes various musical symbols such as clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings like "f", "p", and "mf". There are also many handwritten annotations and corrections throughout the score, indicating a working draft or sketch. The score is written in a style that is characteristic of Arnold Schönberg's late work, featuring complex rhythmic patterns and a high degree of abstraction. The overall impression is one of a highly detailed and carefully worked-out musical composition.

Arnold Schönberg: Variationen für Orchester op. 31, Skizze  
(Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien, Archivnr. 1595)